TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

# MIGUEL ISAZA

## Sounds Don't Fall to the Ground

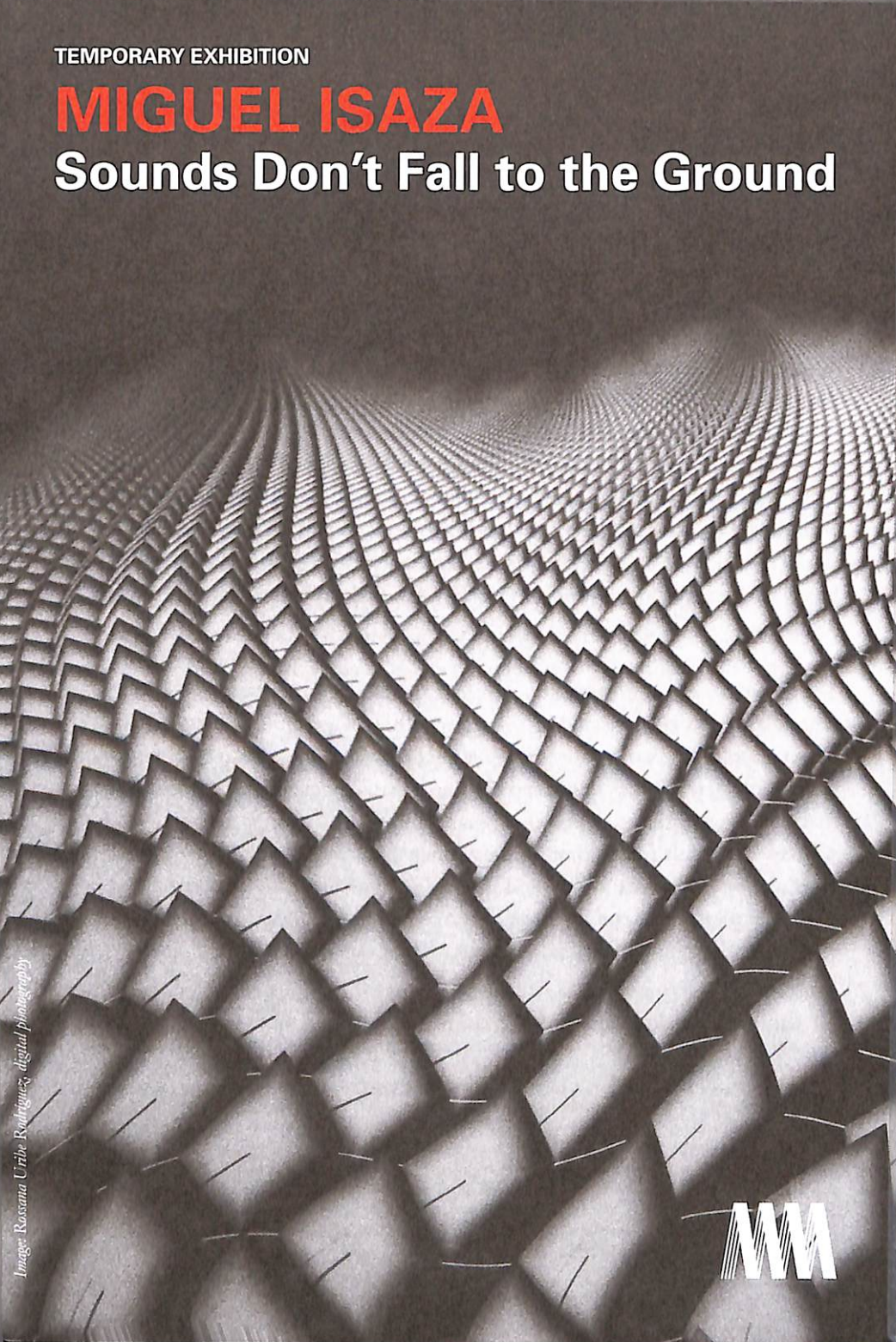

*Image: Rossana Uribe Rodriguez, digital photography*

# MIGUEL ISAZA
# Sounds Don't Fall to the Ground

**March 27 - June 24, 2019**

**Lab 3**

The acousmatic installation *Sounds Don't Fall to the Ground* is generated by a 40-minute composition created from materials collected and processed over more than 10 years[1] . The artist combines philosophical speculation on sound with technology, approaching sound as a cosmic element that possesses its own dimension, a material reality, and oneiric properties. The composition explores the idea of "sonic matter," bringing together thousands of sound recordings processed with digital technology, structured in time and space, to reflect some of its characteristics—texture, form, density, extension, height, mass—and those of listening, through an acousmatic condition: sound without sources, without something to look at.

The way that sound is often conceived of is derived from the idea that sonic manifestation is conditioned by the objects that generate it. This position can be understood from two perspectives—a scientific or physical one that treats sounds as a set of elastic waves in a given medium, and a metaphysical or ontological one that bids for an acoustic naturalism that suggests that sounds are secondary objects that result from other, primary ones. Not only that; it suggests that sounds refer always to their causation and that they are tied to their models of representation. Thus, we have the idea of sound as a kind of generated event resulting from an "object" (body or thing) that comes from a world that stands before sound.

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[1] Acousmatic music (from the Greek *akousma*, "a thing heard") is a type of electroacoustic music composed to be presented via speakers as opposed to a live performance. Unlike musical works that are composed exclusively through scores, compositions that are purely acousmatic (in terms of listening) usually exist as fixed audio recordings. Aspects traditionally thought of as "musical" such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and metrics may be present, but more consideration is generally given to sonic characteristics such as timbre and spectrum. Materials for composition may include sounds derived from musical instruments, voice, electronically generated sounds, audios that have been manipulated using effects processors, as well as sound effects and field recordings. Music is produced with the help of musical technology tools, such as digital recorders, digital signal processors and digital audio work stations. (Wikipedia. Last update: April 18, 2018. Accessed: March 11, 2019, 16:01 UTC. Permanent link: https://es.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=M%C3%BAsica_acusm%C3%A1tica&oldid=107119962)

However, with this installation Isaza raises an alternative consideration: Sound is not an element derived from others, but has its own materiality. Therefore, a sound is not a secondary object, always referring to a supposed cause, but rather an object in and of itself with its own material presence. This positing is based on scientific and metaphysical ideas driven, on the one hand, by the scientist Dennis Gabor and his 'acoustic quantum' that led eventually to a material, plastic, granular, mass-based conception of sound, later called microsound (something like the sonic equivalent of microbiology). From the metaphysical point of view, the issue of sonic matter has raised several questions (and several artists and thinkers such as Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Schaeffer, Denis Smalley, Curtis Roads, and others, have reflected on sound from this perspective)—What are its substance, its accidents, its quality as an element, its relationship with matter as conceived from other fields? What is silence then? Do sounds live? Where do the objects go that fail to fall to the ground?

The composition from which this installation arises is thought of as theory, and vice versa, so that the sounds selected are not intended to inquire into specific representations or themes. Isaza shapes the sounds to array them, parting from their own characteristics, via an invisible architecture of speakers through which sounds of all kinds waft. The sounds were obtained from various locations through a broad range of devices and objects: field recorders, studio microphones, digital synthesizers, pedals, modules, software, hardware—multiple technologies through which the artist has altered them, attempting to account for their ontological character.

The piece is the result of years of work that Miguel Isaza has dedicated to recording, molding, listening to, and combining sounds, in addition to thinking, dreaming, and writing about them from a phonocentric perspective that studies the world with sound as its fulcrum. Audiences are thus immersed in a deep experience of the sonic, where the postulate of *sounds don't fall to the ground* is taken to the limit: sounds do not get wet, do not get cold, do not burn, do not breathe, cannot be touched, do not taste like anything, do not look like anything. Yet they are material objects, in so far as they are affected by other physical forces and manifestations, even when in our ears they appear only as traces of time.

**Miguel Isaza** (Medellín, 1989) is a philosopher dedicated to investigating sound and listening. His projects address art, design, and philosophy through compositions, texts, performance, installation, and curatorship. He is co-founder of Laboratorio Éter, the local Monofónicos label, and Festival Auditum and is the media director Sonic Field and Oasis. His work has been published by record labels dedicated to sound art and experimental music, such as LINE Imprint and Dragon's Eye Recordings (United States), F901 Editions (Italy), Eilean Records (France), White Paddy Mountain (Japan), Audiotalaia (Spain), Nova Fund (Mexico), and Akásha (Colombia), among others. His composition process is based mainly on microsound techniques, and his recent work includes the standout installation *Ethereal Fortore: Swarm* that featured speakers hidden in a garden in a town in southern Italy, as part of the Liminaria 2016 residences.

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